

THE

HISTORIAN

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

March 2012

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, March 15, 2012, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Frank Manchester, Director of the Hancock County Food Pantry. We ask that everyone please bring a nonperishable food item to donate to the Food Pantry. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, March 14**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Garrett Stone, who spoke at the February luncheon of the Historical Society. His entry in the National History Day Contest about the influences of "Star Trek" on society won first place in Mississippi and will represent our state at the national contest in Washington, D. C., later this year. Good luck, Garrett!



The Kate Lobrano House
108 Cue Street, Bay St. Louis, MS
Home of the Hancock County Historical Society

The Formation of the Hancock County Historical Society

By
Eddie Coleman
and
Charles Gray

Organization of the Hancock County Historical Society was the brainchild of Margaret M. Gibbens, who moved to Bay St. Louis from New Orleans in 1971. In an effort to learn something of the Gulf Coast, she found a short-

age of documented material in Hancock County. She wrote the Department of Archives and History in Jackson for advice and then contacted Evelyn (Mrs. Lloyd B.) Griffith, Prim (Mrs. William P.) Hilliker, and Sally (Mrs. Hunter) Kimbrough.

The first important meeting was held in the guest house of Mr. and Mrs. William P. Hilliker on July 14, 1974. Kenneth Hoe from the Gulf Regional Planning Commission spoke and advised the group how to plan and organize the project. Temporary officers selected were Norton Haas, Sr., president; Ames Kergosien, vice-president for history;

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
 Jackie Allain, Publisher

Published monthly by the
**HANCOCK COUNTY
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY

10:00AM — 3:00PM

Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

Sylvia McComminskey, secretary; Peggy Gibbens, treasurer; Prim Hilliker, membership; and Evelyn Griffith, historian. Others present were Margarite Powell, Sally Kimbrough, an artist and free-lance writer, and Polly Mazarakis.

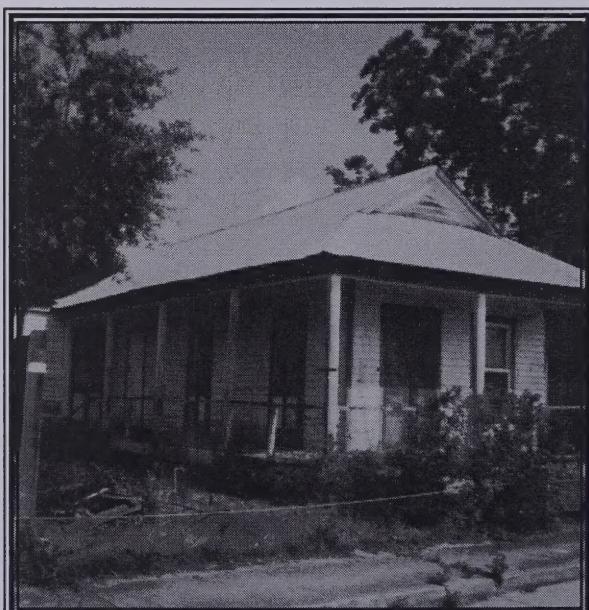
A constitution, by-laws, and a statement of purpose of the organization were drawn up and adopted on February 13, 1975, and a charter of incorporation was issued February 28, 1975. The incorporators were Norton Haas, Sr., Ames Kergosien, Louis Fernandez, Jr., Margaret M. Gibbens, and Sylvia McComminskey.

Initially monthly meetings with fifteen to thirty-five attendees were held either in the homes of various members or in local restaurants. To give the new organization guidance and structure, the Society joined the Mississippi Historical Society and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Not having a permanent home, the members purchased a display case for the public library to display donations and bought mildew-proof cabinets to store files of all material collected by the historians.

The first project of the Society was to document all cemeteries in the county. Obviously such an undertaking was monumental in scope, but the founders of the Society were people of vision. Two other projects were to get a number of buildings in Bay St. Louis listed on the National Register of Historic Places and to find a permanent home for the Society.

In 1977 the Department of Archives and History surveyed properties in the city of Bay St. Louis and nominated 728 units for inclusion in the National Register. There were five districts designated: Beach Boulevard District, Elmwood Historic District, Main Street District, Sycamore Street District, and Washington Street District.

In 1987 Charles Gray wrote Judge Alan Lobrano inquiring about renting the abandoned cottage at 108 Cue Street for the Society's "home." Judge Lobrano's death shortly thereafter delayed the response, but Judge Robert Lobrano telephoned on February 1, 1988, with the news that he had contacted the other heirs of his uncle and that



This picture shows the Lobrano House in 1988 when it was acquired by the Historical Society

NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Of the original 728 units designated as historic buildings in the five original Historic Districts, 227 were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina with 42 lost for various other reasons. Because of these losses the 459 remaining units have been grouped into one inclusive Historic District: Beach Boulevard Historic Preservation District.



Kate Lobrano
01/03/1871—01/19/1921

the family would like to donate the property to the Society with the stipulation it be called the Kate Lobrano House in honor of their grandmother, Judge Robert Lobrano's mother, Katherine.

The deed of transfer for Lot 23, Second Ward, City of Bay St. Louis was executed on May 9, 1988 to the Society from the Lobrano heirs: Clayton J. Borne, Jr.; Joyce Borne Balsamo; Robert Leo Lobrano; Karen Lobrano Schafer; Irma Viola Lobrano; Allen Arundale Warriner; Dorothy Warriner Holman; Cemantha Warriner

Smith; Richard James Warriner; and Inez Warriner Hero.

The house had not been used in about eight years at that time, and its conveniences were antiquated. Additionally, the rear section of the building was severely deteriorated. The sheriff donated labor for clearing the grounds and removing the rear porch and bathroom. Ruth and Jim Thompson donated space in their bakery building across the street for the operation of a consignment store to help with fund-raising for the project. On July 3, 1990, a contract with John Carruth Construction Company of Metairie was made to build a 15 x 30 square foot addition for \$10,856.00 which brought the property into full operation. In 1996 a second addition of nine hundred square feet was constructed to the back of the first addition by Franke Brothers Construction.

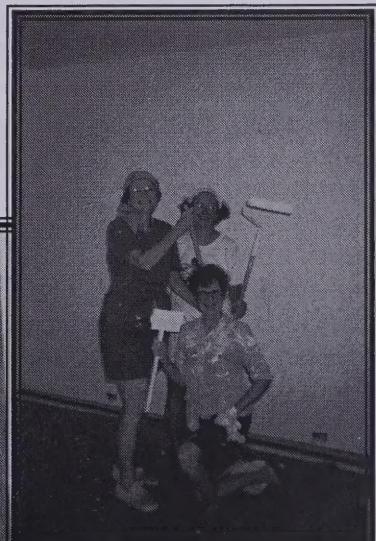
As the building grew, so did the membership: sixteen, twenty-five, one hundred, two hundred, five hundred, one thousand and finally nearly eleven hundred people joined the Society. With the new membership also came volunteers, and subsequently the documentation of information was

astounding. By 2000 there were over ninety thousand entries of Catholic Church records: births, communions, deaths, and marriages. There were inventories of fifty-two cemeteries in the county showing 13,656 graves with maps to the cemeteries as well as census records, county divorce and marriage records, obituaries, early land records, and a record of 728 properties (including photographs) listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

There were also photographs. Among them are many individual and several large collections including the Scafidi Collection, containing nearly six thousand pictures, the Dantagnan Collection of properties mortgaged during the 1930's, the Jermyn Collection including many early postcards of the county, and the Lionel Bourgeois houses and landscapes.

The Mallard Collection contains the glass slide photographs taken shortly after 1900. George Mallard recorded some of the Bay's most beautiful buildings and sites. The Alexander Allison collection from the Library of Congress documents the early 1900's, and the Bufkin, Boardman, Scharff, and Crosslin acquisitions immortalize

Many members volunteered many hours to make the Lobrano House the perfect home for the Hancock County Historical Society.





Installing the walk-in safe presented challenges.

several prominent families of the Bay.

Although the Society is not a dedicated genealogical society, it has several thousand vertical files on Hancock County families and numerous family genealogical publications available for research as well as files on businesses, schools, and other institutions.

Most of the information available at the Lobrano House is, or will be as volunteers and time permit, available on our website: hancockcountyyhistoricalsociety.com.

As it did for everyone on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, presented a challenge to the Historical Society. Fortunately, the Society didn't lose any of its records. However, many volunteers and members were lost because of the physical losses they incurred because of the storm. Nevertheless, many volunteers who came to assist the county in rebuilding visited the Lobrano House and became members of the Society. Some even decided to make their homes in the area. With the new and returning residents the membership has grown to more than one thousand members throughout the continental United States.

Great advancements are being made in recording the history of Hancock County thanks to excellent new equipment and capable volunteers. Ongoing projects include updating the inventories of the county cemeteries, digitizing

the vertical files, and scanning personal photograph collections. We invite area families to add to or, if one does not exist, begin a vertical file on your family genealogy.

SOURCE:

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

NEW MEMBERS

Dickie Hughes
Waveland, MS

Jim and Patty Keating
Diamondhead, MS

Timothy Patrick Stinson, Jr.
Waveland, MS

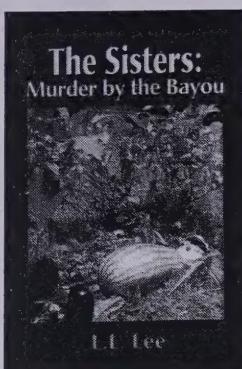
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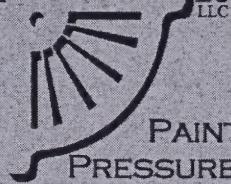
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Heritage Cookbook (\$15.00)

Katrina Cookbook (\$19.95)

Scrapbook of Treasured Memories (\$20.00)

West Side Stories: Before, During, and After on Mississippi's West Coast (\$28.00)

Please see the ad on p. 6 for titles by Paul and Stella LaViolette.

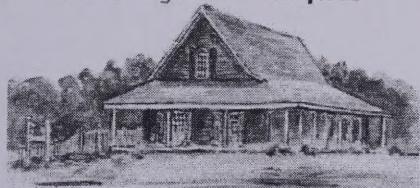


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